



STATE OF HAWAII
DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH
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**Testimony SUPPORTING HB2493
RELATING TO EPIDEMIOLOGISTS.**

REPRESNATIVE JOHN MIZUNO, CHAIR
HOUSE COMMITTEE ON HEALTH AND HUMAN SERVICES
Hearing Date: February 9, 2018 Room Number: 329

- 1 **Fiscal Implications:** N/A.

- 2 **Department Testimony:** The Department of Health strongly supports HB2493, contingent on
- 3 amendments provided below that are identical to HB2553. As currently drafted, HB2493
- 4 inadvertently repeals the department's authority to appoint any epidemiologists.

- 5 Epidemiologists in all subject matter areas are critical to a health department's ability and
- 6 capacity to effectively use data to assure public health practice and policies are scientifically
- 7 based. The Department employs epidemiologists effectively to track and characterize disease
- 8 outbreaks such as those caused by dengue, hepatitis A, norovirus, or mumps by using various
- 9 tools (e.g., GIS mapping, online survey tools) to analyze data to determine specific risks, identify
- 10 potential or specific etiologic agents, or guide public health interventions. Epidemiologists also
- 11 analyze and use environmental, chronic disease, mental health data, or substance abuse data
- 12 including the injuries and deaths related to opioid misuse and abuse, in the same way to benefit
- 13 our public's health.

- 14 **Offered Amendment:**

1 SECTION 1. Section 321-4.3, Hawaii Revised Statutes, is
2 amended to read as follows:

3 "~~§~~**321-4.3** **Epidemiologists.** The department of health
4 may establish [~~up to ten~~] permanent or temporary exempt
5 positions known as epidemiologists for the purpose of
6 investigating diseases and injuries which threaten the public
7 health and safety. The positions shall be appointed by the
8 director without regard to chapter 76."